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Department of State TELEGRAM

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~~S E C R E T~~ STOCKHOLM 1012

DECLASSIFIED
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By ics NARA, Date 3-16-98

NODIS/ASPEN

REF: STATE 128474, STOCKHOLM 986

1. PETRIN WACHTMEISTER AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR HAD TWO AND HALF HOUR LUNCH MY APARTMENT MARCH 15.

2. BASIC POINT WE GLEANED FROM PETRI'S STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUS CONVERSATION WAS HIS CONFIRMATION THAT NVN'S BASIC POSITION ON NEGOTIATIONS HAS NOT BEEN ALTERED SUBSTANTIALLY SINCE SEPTEMBER 1966 STATEMENT TO PETRI THAT IF BOMBING STOPS,"WE KNOW WHAT WE WILL HAVE TO DO." HOWEVER, PETRI MADE CLEAR TO US THAT EITHER TRINH OR PHAM VAN DONG MADE PLAIN TO HIM THAT HANOI'S RESPONSE TO A

PAGE 2 RUDKLM 200 ~~S E C R E T~~
POSSIBLE BOMBING STOP DOES NOT REPEAT NOT INCLUDE ANY RECIPROCAL ACTION ON THE PART OF NORTHVIET-NAM. WE WENT OVER THIS POINT SEVERAL TIMES. PETRI ALSO GAVE US TO UNDERSTAND CLEARLY THAT HANOI CANNOT POSSIBLY ACCEPT SAN ANTONIO FORMULA BECAUSE THAT COULD BE CAPITULATION.

3. WE CANNOT GIVE THE DEPARTMENT A"DETAILED ACCOUNT OF HIS (PETRI'S) CONVERSATIONS IN HANOI", AS REQUESTED REFTEL, BECAUSE HIS ACCOUNT TO US WAS TANGLED. WE PRESSED AT GREAT LEGTH TO ESTABLISH WHO SAID WHAT AND TO WHOM AND WHEN BUT EVEN WITH WACHTMEISTER'S PROMPTING TO HELP, PETRI PERSISTED IN RAMBLING.

4. PETRI'S ESTIMATE OF THE NORTH VIET-NAM LEADERSHIP IS THAT IT WAS EXULTANT OVER THE TET OFFENSIVE SUCCESSES WHICH EVEN THE THE NOJMALLY DOUR TRINH SEEMED TO BASK IN. SUCCESS HAD BEEN GREATER THAN HANOI HAD ANTICIPATED. THE TET OFFENSIVE, ACCORDING TO TRINH, HAD NOT BEEN AIMED PRIMARILY AT THE AMERICANSV IT WAS BASIC-

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ALLY AN OPERATION DESIGNED TO GAIN ADMINISTRATIVE GROUND IN THE URBAN AREAS; IT WAS CARRIED OUT FOR THE MOST PART BY PEOPLE ON THE SPOT WITH A MINIMUM OF OUTSIDE HELP. THE LEADERS TO WHOM PETRI SPOKE(PHAM VAN DONG AND TRINH WERE THE ONLY TWO HE MENTIONED)

MADE CLEAR THEY DO NOT TRUST THE US WORD. THEY MADE PLAIN THAT THEY CANNOT SPEAK FOR FLN(THIS WAS EMPHASIZED TO PETRI BY FLN LEADERS ALSO - PETRI'S SOURCES FOR FLN VIEWS SEEMED TO BE FLN "AMBASSADOR" IN PEKING AND PHNOM-PENH.) PETRI STRESSED THAT THERE WERE SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FLN AND HANOI AND THAT THE LATTER WAS MORE INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATIONS THAN THE FORMER. PETRI RETURNED SEVERAL TIMES TO THE THEME THAT THE FLN WERE"TOUGH GUYS" AND WHILE THEY RESPECTED TO AN EXTENT HANOI'S SOPHISTICATION IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THEY WERE STILL VERY MUCH THEIR OWN MEN.

5. HANOI'S POSITION ON NEGOTIATIONS, AS PETRI PUT IT TO US, BOILS DOWN:
A) AFTER A BOMBING STOP WHICH IS DEFINITE AND CONCLUSIVE HANOI "WILL PACK ITS BAGS IMMEDIATELY" FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH US. WE GOT NO CLARIFICATION OF TIME SPAN NOR DID WE GET ANY CLARIFICATION OF WHAT"PROOF" HANOI WOULD NEED THAT BOMB STOP WAS FINAL, AS SUGGESTED IN TRINH FEBRUARY 8 STATEMENT. PETRI DID SUGGEST THAT A NON-PUBLIC US ASSURANCE THAT BOMBING STOP WAS FINAL MIGHT BE SOME"PROOF".
B) HANOI ENVISAGES"NEGOCIATIONS SUR LES NEGOCIATIONS"IN THE SENSE THAT US-HANOI TALKS WOULD BE DESIGNED TO PUT THE US

"IN TOUCH WITH THE FLN".
C) HANOI SEES THE BASIC QUESTION IN SUBSEQUENT US-FLN NEGOTIATION TO BE"LES MODALITES" OF US WITHDRAWAL.
D) HANOI DOES NOT SEE IT POSSIBLE THAT THE PRESENT SAIGON GOV'T COULD PARTICIPATE IN ANY NEGOTIATION BUT HANOI AND, BY INFERENCE FROM WHAT PETRI SAID, THE FLN CAN ACCEPT A"SUITABLE"GOVERNMENT IN SAIGON COULD PARTICIPATE. PETRI MADE POINT THAT HANOI WILL NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES NEGOTIATE ABOUT SOUTH VIET-NAM; HE STRESSED THAT FLN HAS TOLD HIM SAME THING.

6. SUBSIDIARY TO BASIC US-HANOI NEGOTIATION ABOUT HOW TO GET NEGOTIATIONS GOING WITH FLN(AND HERE PETRI EMPHASIZED THAT THESE PRESUMED US-HANOI NEGOTIATIONS WERE REALLY ONLY ON QUESTIONS OF MECHANICS OF TIME, PLACE, ETC. CONCERNING THE EVENTUAL US-FLN TALKS),

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PETRI SAID HE "UNDERSTOOD" THAT HANOI WOULD EXPECT US TO RAISE PRISONER-OF-WAR ISSUE. ACCORDING TO PETRI, HANOI HAS BEEN IMPRESSED BY CUBAN EXPERIENCE AND IT BELIEVES IT CAN GET HIGH RANSOM FOR US POW'S. BUT, AS NEGOTIATING TACTIC, HANOI WILL NOT RAISE ISSUE BECAUSE IT BELIEVES US WILL RAISE IT. HANOI HAS BEEN STRUCK BY US CONCERN FOR POW'S AND IT IS TAKING CARE TO GUARD POW'S AS"AN

ASSET". PETRI SAID HE HAD BEEN TOLD THEY ARE WELL-TREATED AND KEPT AWAY FROM BOMBED AREAS. THEY ARE KEPT IN SMALL GROUPS TO MINIMIZE RISK ONE US BOMB COULD WIPE OUT THIS "ASSET."

7. WE PROBED TO SEE IF PETRI WOULD REPEAT "HIGH COMPENSATION" DEMAND FOR DAMAGES TO BOMBED AREAS(PARA 3 C STOCKHOLM 986) BUT HE DID NOT.

8. PETRI DID REPEAT THAT GUANTANAMO AND ALGIERS TYPE BASE SOLUTION THAT HE HAD ALLEGEDLY GIVEN NEWSMAN HERE, BUT HE TIED THAT STORY TO WHAT HE HEARD FROM CUBAN AND ALGERIAN CONTACTS (LATTER SUPPOSED TO BE SWEDISH SPEAKING, ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPERMAN). PETRI REFERRED TO CAM RANH BAY, AS EXAMPLE.

9. AT CONCLUSION TALK WE GAVE PETRI AND WACHTMEISTER TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO TELL US THAT PETRI HAD BRIEFED NEWSMEN HERE BUT PETRI DENIED ANY SUCH ACTION. (WE KNOW OF AT LEAST SIX PEOPLE HERE WHO HAVE DETAILED ACCOUNTS OF WHAT PETRI IS UPPOSED TO HAVE SAID, AND WHILE THESE ACCOUNTS DIFFER IN DETAIL, THEY AT NOT POINT CONTRADICT WHAT PETRI TOLD US. WE GOT FURTHER BRIEFING AMERICAN NEWS-

MAN WHICH ADDED NOTHING POINTS COVERED THIS MESSAGE.)

10. PARAGRAPH 2 OF ABOVE IS HEART OF PETRI'S MESSAGE, BUT DEPARTMENT MUST EXPECT THAT STORY ABOUT HIS TRIP IS EVENTUALLY GOING TO BREAK HERE WITH ALL SORTS OF GARBLED DETAILS. FOR US THERE SEEM TO BE THREE POINTS TO BEAR IN MIND:

A). EXCEPT FOR NEWSMAN'S REPORT THAT PETRI SAID "EVERYTHING I (PETRI) KNOW IS KNOWN IN WASHINGTON", ASPEN OPERATION NOT COMPROMISED DIRECTLY ALTHOUGH WE MUST EXPECT AFTONBLADET(WHOSE ASSISTANT

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POLITICAL EDITOR DIETER STRAND HAS STORY) TO PLAY US ALLEGED US OBJURACY IN RUFUSING TO ACCEPT HANOI MESSAGE THAT BOMB STOP WILL LEAD TO NEGOTIATIONS.
BLM PETRI IS WELL-INFORMED, LINQUISTICALLY TALENTED, HAS MANY USEFUL CONTACTS WHICH SEEM OTHERWISE UNEXPLOITABLE BUT HIS VOLUBILITY AS HINTED AT BY VIENTIANNE AND STOCKHOLM IN FALL 1966, IS A HANDICAP. WE SUGGEST THAT THIS WITHOUT REFERENCE TO BASIC QUESTION WE RAISED ABOUT ASPEN IN OUR 973.

C). THE BRIEFING OF THE NEWSPAPERMEN (NOT JUST RADIO SWEDEN AS WE FIRST REPORTED) OBVIOUSLY TOOK PLACE. PETRI'S DENIAL OF IT OPENS POSSIBILITY THAT ANY LEAK NOW COULD BE BLAMED ON THE AMERICANS AND, SPECIFICALLY, ON THE MARCH 15 LUNCH.

11. PETRI TOLD USE HE EXPECTS SPEND SEVERAL MORE WEEKS IN STOCKHOLM ONE OF WHICH IN HOSPITAL FOR MINOR OPERATION.
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